



Get Your Brain in Shape This Summer

Summer's here and it's time for the ultimate hot weather shape-up: a total workout for your beautiful mind as well as your body! The goal: to be sharper by September and ready for school. Each day dedicate 30-60 minutes to toning up your flabby memory and adding speed and agility to your thinking skills.

1. **Rediscover your inner toddler** by getting down and playing with little kids, challenging your dog to Frisbee, playing board games with friends or family. Make humor and laughter a part of your life.
2. **Turn off the computer.** The isolation of working on a computer needs to be complemented with time interacting face-to-face with other people. The brain hates isolation!
3. **Mix it up.** Do activities that use the natural world and all five senses. Keep your brain's speed up and improve its agility by asking these questions about the activities you do each day: Is it novel or new? Is it challenging? Is it complex?
4. **Play Beethoven....badly.** Do something that you stink at. You'll actually be building new neuro-circuits!

5. **Talk with your hands.** Learn sign language--a few signs each day. Learning a new language stimulates the mind!
6. **Become ambidextrous.** Brush your hair or teeth, even swing a bat, or write with your non-dominant hand a few mornings a week to make your mind work harder.
7. **Switch senses.** Close your eyes and find your comb with your sense of touch, rather than sight. Shower with your eyes closed and find the tap or soap by touch only.
8. **Stop and smell the peppermint.** Place a small jar of aromatic herbs--mint, thyme, lavender--near the phone. Sniff it when you dial a new number. See if another whiff helps you remember the number.
9. **Be a road warrior.** In town, change your route when you are biking to a common place to which you travel. Explore new roads and towns when you travel out of town.
10. **Explore** something that you know nothing about. Take the time to learn something new!
11. **Work the body/mind connection.** Get at least one hour a day of aerobic exercise. Getting that blood flowing to the brain improves it and also causes the release of neurotransmitters. Karate, tai chi, and yoga are good also.

12. **Add muscle to your memory.** Practice memorizing lists of unrelated words, or visualize things. Then try to remember them later in the day.

13. **And repeat.** Repetition actually strengthens brain connections.

14. **Train your brain.** You can find brain exercises in all kinds of puzzle and brain teaser books. Check them out at the library or search the web.



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